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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000569

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/20/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: BAD PRESS: LTTE KILLS SUSPECTED DISSIDENTS AFTER
NEWS REPORTS CAMP LOCATION

REF: A. COLOMBO 0487

[B](#). COLOMBO 0312

Classified By: DCM JAMES F. ENTWISTLE. REASON: 1.4 (B,D).

[1](#)1. (U) Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) militants attacked a camp of anti-LTTE Karuna loyalists in Thivichchenei, Polonnaruwa District, in the early morning hours of March 21, killing at least two suspected Karuna cadres. (Note: The Sri Lanka Army claims that the two dead are LTTE cadres.) A five-year-old girl was also reportedly wounded in the crossfire. Polonnaruwa, which borders on the ever-volatile Batticaloa District that had once been a Karuna stronghold, has witnessed increased violence since the February 7 killing there of Kaushalyan, the LTTE's eastern political leader (Reftels). Because Kaushalyan's killing occurred in government-controlled territory close to Sri Lanka Army installations, the LTTE has claimed Government complicity in the slaying.

[1](#)2. (U) The attack followed a report in the March 20 edition of the anti-Government Sunday Leader, which bore the banner headline "Karuna Camp in Government Controlled Area." According to the article, the camp, located in a Tamil village between two Sri Lanka Army checkpoints, has been in operation for seven months and is "an open secret" to local residents. Although the villagers reportedly initially welcomed the sixty or so Karuna cadres, they have since begun to complain of harassment, including forced conscription of local youth. After two young men from the village were executed by unknown assailants on March 14, the villagers reportedly held a protest against the camp, blocking the road with the coffins of the two youths. (Note: According to press and human rights sources, the two young men were affiliated with the Karuna faction. End note.) The article noted that the Sri Lanka Army disavows any knowledge of Karuna camps in the vicinity.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The editor of a leading independent Tamil daily confirmed to poloff on March 21 that the presence of the Karuna camp had long been widely known, including to the LTTE. He speculated that the publicity surrounding the camp had embarrassed the LTTE and prompted the attack.

[1](#)4. (U) The attack on the camp is only the latest development in ongoing tit-for-tat post-tsunami violence in Batticaloa and its surrounding area. Since the killings reported reftels, the depressing litany continues:

--March 7: one Karuna cadre killed in Eravur, 14 km north of Batticaloa;

--March 8: former member of anti-LTTE paramilitary group People's Liberation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) killed in Batticaloa town (in front of police headquarters) by suspected LTTE;

--March 14: two suspected Karuna cadres killed in Polonnaruwa (bordering Batticaloa);

--March 14: grenade attack on LTTE office in Batticaloa; no injuries;

--March 15: one Karuna cadre killed 27 km south of Batticaloa by suspected LTTE;

--March 17: one Karuna cadre killed in Polonnaruwa (bordering Batticaloa);

--March 18: one PLOTE cadre shot and injured in Batticaloa town.

[1](#)5. (SBU) A Sri Lanka Army contact in at the Army camp in Welikanda, Polonnaruwa told POL FSN that the Army had observed about 30 LTTE cadres loitering in the area since March 18. (He did not, however, confirm the existence of the Karuna camp.) He acknowledged hearing gun shots in the vicinity early in the morning of March 21 but did not report that the Army ventured out to investigate. He identified the site of the attack as 13 km from the Welikanda Camp.

[1](#)6. (C) Comment: Unlike embattled Batticaloa, there are no "uncleared" or LTTE-controlled areas in Polonnaruwa District.

Many interlocutors have speculated that the LTTE's campaign against the remnants of Karuna's cadres in Batticaloa have pushed the dissidents, who mark the one-year anniversary of their break with LTTE headquarters this month, out to the comparative safety of government-controlled territory in Polonnaruwa. It is hard to believe that a 60-cadre strong Karuna camp could exist in government-controlled territory, 13 km away from an army camp, without the Sri Lanka Army's knowledge, if not support. On the other hand, it is also hard to believe that if the mainstream press knew about this camp, that the LTTE did not. Why the LTTE tolerated its existence until the press report apparently forced the issue is only the latest confused chapter in the seemingly endless chronicle of violence and intrigue that has beset the east for the past year.

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